



## **Statewide Database Licensing Project: Questions & Answers**

### **What is the Statewide Database Licensing Project?**

The Statewide Database Licensing Project (SDL) is a project of the Washington State Library. Two SDL staff members coordinate the efforts of more than 2000 school, academic, special, and public libraries in purchasing a statewide license to an online, full-text general periodical and newspaper database. Currently, all Washington non-profit libraries may participate in the project. Additionally, SDL staff facilitate group purchases of other database licenses for different groups of libraries. To learn more about the project, visit the web site at <http://www.statelib.wa.gov/sdl>.

### **What is an Online Database?**

Simply put, online databases are organized collections of thousands of magazines, journals, newspapers, and other resources with easy-to-use, efficient search engines. They include online newspaper and periodical indexes and often provide the complete texts of thousands of articles.

### **Who Can Use These Databases and How?**

Online databases provided through SDL are accessed via the World Wide Web using a standard web browser such as Internet Explorer or Netscape. The databases are available to all residents of Washington through non-profit libraries, colleges, and schools. Additionally, Washington residents can use the databases from their home or business computers. The latter is referred to as *remote access*.

### **What Are the Benefits?**

**Excellence** of quality. Internet users have widely criticized the poor, inaccurate, biased, or misleading information available via the Internet and the inadequacies of popular free search engines. SDL provides access to reliable information compiled by established vendors, many of whom have done business with libraries and the private sector for decades. The information is produced by known and trusted publishers.

**Equity** for all. SDL provides an equitable means for citizens in all areas of the state, whether rural or urban, to access these information rich resources.

**Economy** of scale. SDL saves participant schools, colleges, and libraries hundreds of thousands of dollars through aggregated group purchasing. Many SDL participants could not afford these databases on their own.

## **What Costs are Involved?**

The databases are licensed for use on an annual basis much like a subscription to a magazine. The license pays for the cost of accessing the content of the databases including the cost of searching, viewing, downloading, and printing articles.

## **Who Pays?**

SDL is funded currently by a federal, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. LSTA funds pay for the cost of administering the program and for half of the cost of the database license. The participating library community pays the other half.

## **What are the Program Costs?**

The program costs include the cost of conducting advisory board meetings, attending library conferences, providing presentations, meeting with local or regional library groups, providing exhibits, training, working with vendors, trouble-shooting customer service issues, purchasing and maintaining computer equipment and office supplies, and paying for salaries and benefits for SDL staff.

## **What is the future of the SDL Project?**

SDL began in 1998 as a pilot project. Arguably, it is the most popular project ever offered by the Washington State Library. Virtually all eligible libraries and schools in the state are voluntarily participating. The project benefits every resident of Washington for about 20 cents per person per year. That is less than the price of a postage stamp.

Federal funds which were used to purchase half the cost of the database license will not be available after June 30, 2002. Funds used to support the administration of the project will not be available after September 30, 2002. The continuance of SDL will require alternative funding such as state funds or participants bearing the major portion of the project. The Washington State Library has requested the 2002 legislature to replace federal funding with state funds.

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